**Bonded Together**

**Intro** – This lesson explores something which God values very highly – His children becoming bonded together. Many things in life will seek to bind themselves to us. Much of the New Testament speaks of the bonds that sin creates. God has a different idea for us, i.e., being bound to one another.

**Ephesians 4:1-4** *- Therefore I, a prisoner for serving the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling, for you have been called by God. 2 Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. 3 Make every effort to keep yourselves united in the Spirit, binding yourselves together with peace.*  NLT

“Keeping ourselves united in the Spirit” and “binding ourselves together with peace” are parts of the Scripture text that we read over quickly, not really understanding precisely what either means. Consequently, we don’t know how to accomplish either one. They sound good and churchy, but we usually read on to find something we understand better, like a promise about getting our kids to behave, silencing an enemy, or being free from digestive problems. I am learning, as a pastor, that the solutions to our specific problems are found not as much in a particular tactic, but in fulfilling the deepest hopes which our Father has for all of His children. These seemingly bland, generalized sections of the Scripture are probably the most powerful. For example, we do have and will always need the ability to cast a demon out of a person, or to lay hands on a sick person to affect a miracle. Wonderful and necessary as those both are, how much more powerful is it to bring many people into a Christian community where we are bound to one another and not to a demon!? Those people will probably never have to go through the torment of being demonized prior to their deliverance through the hands of an anointed Christian. They bypass the demon experience simply by being bonded to each other.

Something to think about: There isn’t much “binding” of one Christian to another in the modern church. Well-meaning pastors cater to the passworded, privacy-obsessed modern society of today and keep people a bit distant from each other as a matter of deliberate practice. If people don’t get to know each other, they are less likely to offend each other and cause problems. A big room full of listeners who disperse soon after the campus sermon is delivered is a trouble-free way to have church for everyone involved. The modern church doesn’t need to learn social distancing, we’ve been practicing it for hundreds of years!! In the following verse, I want to reveal an incredibly simple way to bond with each other:

**Rev 3:20-22**

20 "Look! I stand at the door and knock. If you hear my voice and open the door, I will come in, and we will share a meal together as friends. 21 Those who are victorious will sit with me on my throne, just as I was victorious and sat with my Father on his throne.

22 "Anyone with ears to hear must listen to the Spirit and understand what he is saying to the churches." NLT

This verse is a popular one. We use it in our salvation formulas to urge people to “make a decision” for Jesus. The total emphasis is on “opening the door.” In actuality, the most important, most impactful, most time consuming event in the verse is that Jesus wants to have a meal with us as His friends. Walking in the door took only a few seconds. The MEAL was the REAL DEAL! So, Jesus Himself uses this common human experience to build a bond with anyone who believes in Him. He wants to eat regularly with us and will do so as we remember Him over a friendship meal called the Lord’s Supper. This is also a major way, maybe the preeminent way, in which we bond with one another.

**Concl** - It is no coincidence that Jesus did much, maybe most, of His teaching during meals. No coincidence that He revealed Himself to two of His followers after His resurrection during a meal in their home in Emmaus. No coincidence that He was anointed for burial at a meal by a worshipping woman. No coincidence that He ate fish and honey after revealing himself to the disciples after His resurrection. No coincidence that during the Passover meal, Jesus introduced the most powerful bonding event which the church will ever know: The Lord’s Supper! In the weeks ahead we will learn more about this powerful phenomenon.